Tanner a finalist for Sportsmanship award

Senior one of 10 recognized for prestigious honor

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Glenview, Ill. - With awards season officially underway, the Awards and Recognition Association (ARA) announces the top 10 finalists for its fifth annual sportsmanship award and Middle Tennessee's Phillip Tanner is among the honorees. The award is given to one outstanding NCAA Division 1 collegiate football player who best personifies the spirit of sportsmanship.

The 2009 Sportsmanship Award recipient will be chosen from one of 10 finalists and announced this December. Finalists are represented from a variety of schools of all sizes throughout the United States from West Virginia and Kansas to Indiana and Illinois. Previous winners are Northwestern University receiver Eric Peterman (2008); Washington State quarterback Alex Brink (2007); Cincinnati Bengels fullback Brian Leonard (2006); and Carolina Panthers running back, DeAngelo Williams (2005).

"As the only national award that recognizes an athlete's character and leadership as it translates to sportsmanship, the ARA Sportsmanship Award was created five years ago to shed light on these positive traits," said Glenn Beckworth, president of the ARA.

"It's encouraging to cull through such a great number of high caliber nominations. These young men are role models and stand out players who give 100 plus percent both on the football field and in life."

To qualify for the award, an athlete must be in good academic standing; demonstrate great respect for competitors, school, teammates and coaches; show an ability to accept victory and defeat graciously; convey a high degree of humility and integrity; and demonstrate commitment in the classroom and to the community.

The finalists were selected in a blind process.

The 2009 award recipient will be announced in December. The finalists, in alphabetical order, are:

1. Mike AnelloUniversity of Notre Dame. A walk-on known as "Rudy with responsibility" by his teammates and fans, defensive back Anello graduated in 3 and a half years and earned Beta Gamma Sigma academic, first team academic and prestigious Nick Pietrosante Award. Anello also turned down Wall Street job offers to continue playing and giving back to his community by participating in the Tackle the Arts program, serving as campus guide and offering aid to hurricane Katrina victims.

2. Andrew BrewerNorthwestern University. Wide receiver Brewer is a Football Leadership Council member, was named to the Phil Steele's pre-season All-Big Ten squad and the Academic All Big Ten. Known by his teammates and coaches as driven by his strong Christian faith, Brewer is an active member in the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and received their Champion of Character Award. His strong desire to serve others off of the field shows itself with his work with food pantries, homeless organizations and local schools.

3. Russel FisherSaint Francis University. Defensive end and teammate mentor, Fisher is known for his tireless work ethic and as a player who leads by example. As a Phi Kappa Theta member, team captain, Campbell Scholar Athlete Award recipient and member of the 2009 Allstate /American Football Coaches Association (AFCA) Good Works Team, Fisher continues his commitment to the community, philanthropy and campus while keeping a positive attitude despite team setbacks.

4. Tim HillerWestern Michigan University. Quarterback, team leader and 4.0 student, Hiller completed his undergraduate degree in three years and is now pursuing his MBA. Hiller broke the WMU record for single season pass completions, attempts, yards and touchdowns, while also serving as a community service leader tutoring math and English at the local high school. He also started up the WMU chapter of Fellowship of Christian Athletes and went on a faith-based mission to Trinidad.

5. Jammie KirlewIndiana University. Defensive end, Academic All Big Ten member and semifinalist for the 2009 William C. Campbell Trophy, Kirlew is described as the most active student-athlete in the community. As an AFCA Good Works Team member, he also campaigned for President Obama, registered hundreds of students to vote, is a Big Brother and led his team in two of the largest off-field projects benefiting children.

6. Jeron MastrudKansas State University. Tight end and team leader earning Academic All-American accolades, Mastrud shows a high degree of humility and integrity and is described as a hard worker when it comes to both academics and sports. One of three tight ends in K-State history to record 1,000 career receiving yards, Mastrud is actively involved in community service and a nominee for the AFCA Good Works team.

7. Matt ReaganUniversity of Memphis. A punter/kicker tied for third in all-time career PATs made, Reagan is also described as the epitome of the student-athlete. Member of the ESPN The Magazine Academic All-District, Reagan also contributes his time with food drives and hospital visits, and serves as the Student Athlete Advisory Committee representative, while double majoring in mathematics and earth science.

8. Adam RundhValparaiso University. Defensive lineman, Denmark native and team blogger, Rundh received an honorable mention from the All-Pioneer Football league selection and earned the ESPN The Magazine Second Team Academic All American honors. Described as an exemplary role model for the team on the field, Rundh also received the Arthur Ashe Jr. Sports Scholar award and volunteers in the community by tutoring under-privileged youths.

9. **Phillip Tanner**Middle Tennessee. Running back and AFCA Good Works Team member, Tanner shares victories with his teammates and takes responsibility for losses. Never refusing an interview, Tanner is also involved in and a leader for multiple programs for student-athletes to be active in the community. He participates in service projects such as Habitat for Humanity, Big Brothers and hurricane relief efforts.

10. Reed WilliamsWest Virginia University. Linebacker, Dean's List, ESPN The Magazine Academic All-American First Team member and double major in finance and marketing, Williams is described as a humble leader with exceptional character who always takes time for fans and children. Despite injuries in 2008, Williams assisted coaches and teammates from the sidelines while giving back to the community Boys and Girls clubs, Special Olympics and other organizations benefiting children.

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